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A

LETTER TO THE KING,

ON

THE REPEAL

OF THE

TEST AND CORPORATION LAWS,

AS IT AFFECTS

Our Christian Monarchy.

BY THE

REV. EDWARD IRVING, A. M.

MINISTER OF THE NATIONAL SCOTCH CHURCH, LONDON.



LONDON:

JAMES NISBET, 21, BERNERS STREET.

MDCCCXXVIII.

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TO

HIS MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY

T H E K I N G .

SIRE,

NOTHING but the deepest conviction of the extreme peril, in which the kingdom at present standeth, and that your Majesty is the only person who hath power to avert the danger, would justify your Majesty's faithful subject, in thus trespassing upon that most precious time, which should be spared by every one, for the royal functions unto which God hath set it apart. The extreme peril to which I refer, and which moveth me, though most unwilling, and inapt to affairs of state, to step out of my ordinary sphere, in the duty I owe to your Majesty, and the love I bear to the Constitution, both of Church and State, will inevitably and at once arise to the kingdom, if the Bill now pending in Parliament, on the subject of the Test and Corporation Acts, should, in its present form, pass into a law: for that Bill doth open offices of trust, offices of magistracy, offices of judgment, and offices of legislation, unto men who profess no faith in God, nor in the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom kings reign, and princes decree justice. And if your Majesty should sanction such a Bill by your royal

assent, you will thereby do an act never yet done by a Christian prince, and effectually, as I shall shew, sign away the charter of this kingdom, as a Christian kingdom. Nor will the clause, defensive of the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, which is inserted in the Bill, serve in any way to avert the evil, because it contains no acknowledgment of Christ or of God, or of any orthodox doctrine held by the church, and amounteth to no more than a promise, to do nothing to the prejudice of the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, as established institutions of the realm; which is no acknowledgment of the church as apostolical or divine, but only of the church as political. Now this hath no respect to Christ's presence in the church by the Holy Spirit, but only to the act and authority of the kingdom which hath established it; so that, in making this declaration, no homage whatever is yielded unto God and Christ, no reverence nor obedience whatever offered unto the church as a divine institution. Wherefore if the Bill, as it now stands, should pass into a law, integrant and essential parts of the constitution of the kingdom do straightway become unchristian, from having been Christian; and there is no let, nor hindrance, why the whole body political should not in like manner renounce Christ, and turn to infidelity. There is indeed a certain defence still subsisting in your Majesty's prerogative, to choose your own servants, which, being rightly exercised, may afford some protection to your Majesty as an individual, the highest and noblest in the kingdom, but will afford none to the kingdom itself, or to your Majesty, as the head thereof. Now the peril which I apprehend, is a peril from the hand of God, unto your Majesty, and unto all your Majesty's liege subjects, in consequence

of this, which would be a solemn act of apostacy from Christ, the Prince of the kings of the earth. For be assured, Sire, that in a State which once and of a long time hath been Christian in all its constitutions, from the least even unto the greatest, if at length, through blindness of mind, and disbelief of God's government for Christ, that State should admit avowed disbelievers in Christ's divinity, in Christ altogether, yea, in revelation itself, to sit in the sessions of law and judgment, God will immediately withdraw himself from that nation which hath so dishonoured his Son, because he hath no more fellowship with Belial than light hath with darkness. Being deeply convinced, therefore, that the well-being of our Sovereign Lord the King, and of all his subjects, is in imminent peril, I have not been able to refrain myself any longer from opening this matter unto your Majesty, the chief man of the kingdom ; and I do entreat you, Sire, to vouchsafe your attention unto your Majesty's humble and dutiful subject, who is an ordained minister of the Church of Scotland.

Your Majesty, as the Father of all your people, may well desire to see them living in harmony with one another, and enjoying an equal share of your royal favour. But your Majesty, as a Christian King, anointed by the church in behalf of Christ, and holding your kingdom directly from Christ, who is over all, God blessed for ever, may not do that which will offend Christ your Prince, unto whom you are responsible, and unto him only ; much less may you, his Lieutenant in this part of his dominions, nourish and advance, or give countenance unto, any one therein, who openly disalloweth the supremacy, denieth the divinity, and contemneth the authority of Christ.

If your Majesty were not a Christian King, anointed in the name of the blessed Trinity, you would be at liberty to shew an equal favour unto all your people, as well those who deny as who confess the name of Christ, who dishonour as who obey his laws ; but as you reign under Christ, and for Christ, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, to exercise such indiscriminate favour, would be as if one of your Majesty's Governors abroad, or Lord Lieutenants at home, should, through supineness, weakness, or false liberality, permit words to be uttered, and actions to be done, against your Majesty's prerogative, and unto such treasonable persons deal out not the less with an equal hand, the honours, the dignities, and the powers of his jurisdiction. On the other hand, as such a Lieutenant of your Majesty should forget his own private interests and personal friendships, in his zeal for your Majesty's honour, and repress, by all lawful means, such gainsayers and withstanders of the royal dignity, while he entreateth with impartial favour every upholder of the same ; even so, is it the part of a Christian King, to repress, by all the means which Christ hath permitted, those who set at nought his supreme authority in Church and State, in heaven and in earth, while, to all who uphold and maintain it, he should extend an equal protection and an equal favour : this is a great and fundamental ground of distinction, amongst your subjects, which the constitution of the kingdom, under Christ, requireth at the hand of your Majesty.

If it should so happen, to any of your Majesty's Lieutenants at home or abroad, as that a part of the people, under his jurisdiction, should have refused to take the oath of allegiance unto your Majesty, and for such disaffection be precluded from the immunities and

honours of the kingdom, and that another portion of your Majesty's subjects, living contiguous to them, and somewhat under the same laws and customs, though otherwise well affected to your Majesty's Government, should, in the greatness of their loyalty and self-denial, have consented to go, and to remain, under the same deprivations; but afterwards, changing their mind, and desiring the fellowship of power and honour, which heretofore they had of their own free will foregone, should come unto your Majesty's Lieutenant, and ask, in right of their well-known allegiance and loyal subjection, to be treated with an equal share of confidence and trust; it is clear, that, upon every principle of good government, their request should be acceded to. But if they should make common cause with those their neighbours, still standing out against the right of the Sovereign, and insist that these disaffected persons also should be admitted to places of trust along with them, and that for their sake the oath of allegiance should be dispensed with, yea, and altogether expunged from the constitutions of the kingdom; what would be the duty of your Majesty's Lieutenant towards such forward and unconstitutional petitioners, whose prayer struck at the very life of your Majesty's dignity and sovereignty in that part of your dominions? Would their good and peaceable behaviour in times past justify them in asking now, that the great bulwark of the monarchy, which is the oath of allegiance, should be removed out of the way, for the admission of those who, from the beginning until now, have been known and noted for their disaffection? Wisdom and righteousness, and common sense itself, would say, nay; but rather, if such are to be taken into the fellowship of power and office under your Majesty's Lieutenant—if it should be necessary, for

the maintenance of that part of the kingdom, to commit such a solecism in government as never yet, in the annals of kingdoms, hath been committed, let the safeguards and defences be made doubly, yea, ten times more strong, now that we are to take a known enemy into the inward administration of affairs.

This, though an hypothesis, is exactly the case which will be presented to your Majesty, if the Bill, now pending in the Upper House of Parliament, should be passed by their Lordships, in the form in which it hath been submitted to them from the Lower House. For your Majesty's piety and duty unto Christ and his church, is too well known to make any of your subjects apprehend doing your Majesty offence, by saying, that you are only the Lieutenant of Christ, the King of kings, in and over all your wide dominions. You, therefore, are that Lieutenant referred to in the illustration above. The orthodox Dissenters are the loyal subjects who consented, and over again renewed their consent, to be deprived of the offices contemplated in the Test and Corporation Acts; whereby they deserved well of the kingdom, which owes them a debt of gratitude. The Unitarians, and Deists, and Infidels, who are now multiplied to a mighty host within the realm, taking to themselves the name and banner of liberality, in order to entrap the unwary, are the disaffected unto Christ the King, whose Lieutenant your Majesty is: and to guard against the admission into power of Papists, who are nothing so vile in the sight of God, as those classes named above, the orthodox, and loyal, and constitutional Dissenters, in times past, did consent to come under those disabilities from which they now seek to be relieved. The oath of allegiance

unto Christ—the only one which he hath authorized, is the eating, by faith, of his flesh, and the drinking of his blood, in the Holy Sacrament; whereto every one who will not submit, is declared by the Lord to have no life in him; and, therefore, our fathers, believing in Christ, took this to be the true test of faith and obedience, the true sacrament, or oath of allegiance, unto Christ, as the only head of the church, and Prince of the kings of the earth. Wherefore, also, your Majesty doth, after your coronation, partake of the Sacrament according to the forms of the Church of England. From this act of allegiance unto Christ, these heterodox communities above mentioned desire to be delivered, and the orthodox Dissenters agree with them in their desire, and yet they would have offices of trust under your Majesty nevertheless. They kick against Christ's only test of discipleship, only sacrament of allegiance, and they ask your Majesty, Christ's Lieutenant, to admit them to the fellowship of that power, which is delegated unto you by Christ, and, of which Christ shall require from you a faithful account. May such a thing be done by Christ's Lieutenant? Should such a thing be asked by those who call Christ, Lord? It hath been asked by those who call Christ, Lord; and on the plea of sanctity it hath been asked; but God forbid that it should be granted by your Majesty, enlightened as you are, in your lieutenancy under Christ, and bound as you are, by your own solemn oath, "To the utmost of your power to maintain the laws of God, the true profession of the Gospel, and the Protestant Reformed Religion, established by law."

If the orthodox Dissenters, who believe in the Divinity of Christ, and his office as King and Lord of

all, and who look upon the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as no mere commemorative rite, but as the Sacrament of our allegiance unto Christ our King, should come forward, and ask, upon these grounds of orthodox faith, to be taken into the fellowship of power, such a request would be worthy of all grave and deliberate consideration. But it unfortunately happens, that the Dissenters from the Church of England do not exhibit any form of doctrine, either upon the subject of the Trinity, or of the Sacraments, or indeed upon any subject whatever, contenting themselves with verbal professions of their belief in the Word of God, and some declarations, also verbal, concerning their views and experience of its truths. This, however, is not the case with that class of your Majesty's subjects, commonly called Seceders from the Kirk of Scotland, who hold the same confession of faith and rule of discipline with the church from which they have seceded. With respect, however, to that very numerous part of your Majesty subjects, who exhibit and subscribe no form of doctrine whatever, it is clearly impossible, and would indeed be the greatest solecism in Government, that they should be taken into a Christian State to which they have given no certificate of, or voucher for, their orthodox belief. For, however much the question of creeds may be agitated in the church, upon the principle that God only knoweth the heart, it is clear, that in the State, where men have to do with men, where men are to be governed by men, there must be some defined oath or attestation, which may be for an end of strife. Unless all oaths and written forms of receiving and holding power are to be abolished, from the Coronation Oath of your Majesty downwards, the whole

fabric of the Constitution taken to pieces, and the law left to the will and arbitration of the magistrate after he is chosen, which no one will argue for, there ought surely to be made a declaration unto the name, and an oath of obedience taken unto the highest person of all, which is, Christ; unless we are from henceforth to constitute your Majesty independent of Christ, Lord in your proper right, and not by vicegerency from God, which would destroy the ground of all Christian government; or, upon the other hand, to allege, as some most unconstitutionally do allege, that your Majesty deriveth your right from the people, and is responsible to the people. If they hold the constitutional doctrine of the kingdom of England, and the kingdom of Scotland, as cleared from Papal errors at the Reformation, confirmed at the Revolution, and unchangeably fixed at the Union, to wit, that you govern under Christ, and for Christ, as do also all the authorities under your Majesty; then, surely, they will not ask, at least they ought not to ask, to be admitted to office, without a solemn act and oath of allegiance rendered unto your Majesty's superior, which is God over all, as well as an act and oath of allegiance unto your Majesty, his Lieutenant. To ask your Majesty to sanction such an order of things in your kingdom, is virtually to ask that you should permit yourself to be acknowledged as a Sovereign, without any acknowledgment of Christ your head; which is an awful thing to have been ever named amongst us, which is a most unworthy thing to have requested of your Majesty, and which I devoutly pray that the Lord may enable your Majesty, with all piety and fortitude, to resist.

For if it were permitted that the members of the

House of Commons, who form a constituent part of the Legislature, should be returned without any knowledge or assurance of their being Christians; how should there be any knowledge or assurance of their exercising the high and holy function of law-giving, in the fear and obedience of Jesus Christ, and in the spirit of the revealed Word of God? And the Magistrates of cities, and towns, and all corporations, into whose hands is committed the jurisdiction of a large portion of your Majesty's subjects, would be found exactly in the same case, being men not sworn unto God and Christ, and concerning whose religion no account hath been taken. Now, it is well known to your Majesty, that all Courts are constituted in the name of the blessed Trinity, and all acts proceed with that divine sanction. How inconsistent, then, that the persons who administer the offices of judgment and execution, should not be known to be of the same faith and of the same spirit! This were to create such confusion, and to open the door to so much hypocrisy and contradiction, between the living agents of the Government, and the express forms of the constitution, as no kingdom could long, in the nature of things, endure; even though, which is not for a moment to be believed, God were not to interfere with express judgments upon so hideous an apostacy from the faith and the honour of his own Son.

But be assured, most honoured and beloved King, that God would not fail to avenge himself upon the kingdom which should, from such a height, descend, of its own accord, into such impiety and infidelity. Your Majesty being well versed in the annals of this kingdom, doth know how forward we stood in

our testimony against the Papacy, which had committed the enormity of putting the king under the church, instead of putting him under Christ the head of the church, and had asserted that the priest might rule the king. This monstrous union of priest and king in one person, the preachers of the Reformation in these lands did expose, out of the Holy Scriptures, whereto your Majesty's progenitors did give reverend heed, until, at length, through manifold perils and vicissitudes, we were wholly delivered from the Papal yoke, and took the highest post of honour upon the earth, the post of maintaining the royal priesthood of Christ, against the royal priesthood of the Bishop of Rome. And this post of preferment upon the earth,—a nation united for God, against nations confederate for idolatry and man-worship,—your Majesty's royal line hath maintained, in the face of all nations. And when infidelity arose at the French Revolution, to constitute another monstrous form of power, which is power derived from the people and not from Christ, and holden for the people and not for Christ, your Majesty's father, of beloved memory, was stirred up by God, mightily to withstand this invention of the Devil. But though God honoured your father to begin the mighty work of contending against infidelity, which makes the people king, and public opinion law, God reserved it for your father's son, our beloved king, who now, by the grace of God, reigneth over us; even unto yourself, Sire, did God reserve it, to subvert the great infidel supremacy over Europe, and to restrain the person of the great infidel king. Behold, also, how your Majesty, as the head of the great Protestant nation of the earth, hath laid prostrate, in another quarter of the world, the

chief cities of Mahomet, of Bramah, and of Budh, the three principal superstitions of the east. Behold, also, how the popish kings were brought to seek a refuge in your Majesty's dominions, and to taste of your Majesty's bounty. And time would fail me to speak of your Majesty's honour and power, in all parts of the earth, from pole to pole. All this glory hath the God of heaven bestowed upon your royal father, and upon yourself, most mighty King, in consideration of that stout and uncompromising opposition which was made by all the constitutions of the kingdom, that protest taken, that interdict maintained, against the Pope and all his wicked inventions. Now, if a kingdom, thus exalted, of God, above all kingdoms on the earth, whose merchants also are as princes, and whose people are blessed with all science, and art, and enterprize; if this nation, whose head your Majesty is, should now, forgetting all these favours and blessings of God in times past, break down her bulwarks and defences against Socinians and Infidels on the one hand, and against Papists on the other; what less can we look for, than the utmost indignation, and the severest judgment of God, whom we have renounced? As it was with Judah, when she forgot her deliverance in the days of Hezekiah, so shall it be with us, if we forget our deliverance, in the years that are past. For as Sennacherib shook his hand over Jerusalem, but was not permitted to cast a stone into it, so the mighty Infidel Prince, now no more, after subduing all Christendom besides, did long and bitterly rage against us, but at length fell, crushed by our men of war; which deliverance of God, if we forget, and open the high places of the kingdom unto unprofessing and unbelieving men, and even unto infidels,

then, as surely as Nebuchadnezzar was raised up in Sennacherib's room, to lay Jerusalem on heaps, and carry her people unto Babylon, so surely shall God raise up a scourge for Britain, to do that of which it will be a pain even to hear the report.

Now, forasmuch as this great wickedness, which is now proposed to be done, within the state of your Majesty's kingdom, doth find no mean patronage from the silence of those who consider themselves, and ought to be considered, as the representatives and guardians of religion, I mean the churches of England and Scotland, by law established, chiefly, if we may judge from what is in every one's mouth, out of a certain zeal, which hath, of a sudden, flamed up, for the purity of the sacrament, and which, alas! shews itself in no other part of discipline, and towards no other persons, but only in this matter of the office-bearers of the state; and as the silence of others, who discern both the incorrectness and incompleteness of this zeal without knowledge, is construed into a contentment with, and even a desire of, the enactment in question; I hold it to be good and profitable now that I have thus taken upon me, to indite words unto my King, to expose the plea of sanctity, which is urged in behalf of the great National Act, now hastening to completion; but still, I thank God, hanging in suspense.

It is argued, on the score of sanctity, that it is a profanation of the holy Sacrament to use it, as the State hath appointed it to be used. The true force of this argument will be seen, by considering the relative bearings of the parties concerned, which are, the State and the Church. The State requireth, for her part, that all her servants should be members of the body of Christ, by their own solemn act. It

doth not take upon itself to dictate unto the church in this, or in any other part of her discipline; but simply looking to the church, as she representeth herself in her standards of doctrine and discipline; and perceiving that none but "those who do truly and earnestly repent them of their sins, and are in love and charity with their neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his ways," are permitted, or even invited, to partake of this holy ordinance, the State doth say, Let such and such only as have solemnly confessed, and believed, and acted, as these standards of the church require of her communicants to do, be admitted unto the fellowship of power and government in the State. And in so requiring, and in so enacting, the law is holy, and just, and good. If to the office of a catechist in the church, who doth but instruct and administer discipline over children, it be held, by all Christian communities, a right godly thing that the Bishops, and Presbyters, and Deacons of the church should have made proof of the competency of his knowledge, and the blamelessness of his walk and conversation; how much more is it needful that the administrators of justice and equity to a Christian people, (whom God, for their dignity, so expressive of his own, doth not hesitate to call gods,) should have been reported by the guardians of the faith and discipline of the church, to be sound in the belief, competent in the knowledge, and blameless in the life of a Christian. Let not your Majesty be offended with the boldness of your servant, who is zealous for the honour of this kingdom, constituted in such holiness, and grieved to hear the most Christian and religious enactment of our fathers traduced, as an

unholy thing, and their mighty zeal for God treated by an affected puritanism, as if it were a wilful and a wicked desecration of Christ's holy ordinance.

To this defence and apology for that which should be the kingdom's boast and glory, it is wont to be answered, that these enactments were not present from the beginning of the Protestation which we lifted up against the papacy; but was introduced in times of trouble and inconstancy, of violence and irritation. So I answer, hath been every defence, and every bulwark of the church, and of the kingdom, since the world began; the Nicene Creed, Magna Charta, the Clarendon Constitutions, and even the Reformation itself, the Bill of Rights, and every other bulwark of the kingdom, were introduced in similar times. No one troubleth himself to wear armour, but when and where he is in danger. No one troubleth himself to turn his house into a castle of defence, but when he is threatened by his enemies; so neither doth the Church or the State construct defensive barriers, save to protect and preserve the integrity and well being of the kingdom. But when it was experienced, that those who acknowledged not Christ as the only supreme ruler over kingdoms, were continually plotting against the Lord, and in favour of him, whom they did uphold in the stead of Christ, the State, wearied out at length, did enact those laws, which we possess, as the transmitted piety and experience of our fathers, and under which we have attained our pre-eminency, and preserved our peace as a nation, notwithstanding those great short-comings and transgressions, of which we are guilty, and amongst which I rank the desecration of the Sacrament in no secondary place.

Whence then doth this desecration proceed, and against

whom doth the guilt of it lie, seeing we have shewn the State to be guiltless? It is with shame and confusion of face, that I, who am a Minister of the church, do confess, that the guilt of this desecration of God's holy ordinance is wholly chargeable upon the church: but seeing the Church of Scotland, whereof I am a Minister, holdeth both the right and the duty of Kings, to take order that the sound doctrines and true discipline of the church should be set forth and observed within the kingdom; to whom but to your Majesty can this appeal in the last instance be made? Therefore, forgetting as much as may be all partiality of the churchman, and endeavouring to arm myself with true love for the great Head of the church, which is the Lord Jesus Christ, and to feel honour for your Majesty, His Lieutenant, I will not shrink from taking it upon my own head, and the head of all churchmen, to whom the keys of office were committed, that we who were required of the State trustfully and faithfully to report the knowledge and the character of men, and righteously to administer the seal of Christ's discipleship, should have, in our great dishonesty unto Christ, and favour for men of low rank and station, in our great unholiness and unworthiness to minister at his altar, or even to tread his courts, suffered all men, without due inquiry into their motives and designs, to receive the blessed body and blood of Christ, to profane it, to set their feet upon the altar, as the Pope doth upon the day of his installation. To us, O King, even unto us, and to our fathers, who minister at the altar of God, be the shame and the sin of this great desecration; but unto the State, which did neither require it of us, nor encourage us in it, be no share of the blame.

And where does the remedy of such a great evil lie? Not surely in doubling the evil by desecrating the State also, because the unfaithfulness of the church hath permitted wicked and worthless men to pass their holy censure, and the State hath somewhat suffered thereby. Is this suffering to be remedied by taking away the censure altogether? If the steward of your Majesty's Household should, through negligence or self-interest, permit unworthy and dishonest servants to be in your Majesty's palace, and about your Majesty's person, would the remedy be, to have no steward at all? Surely the remedy would be, to reprove him for his wickedness, and if he repented not, to remove him altogether, and advance a faithful man into his room. Even so, if the churches established over your Majesty's subjects, to preach that doctrine, and maintain that discipline which, having been submitted to the King and the Estates of Parliament, did receive their sanction, and by their authority were established over the kingdom, shall come at any time, through a depraved spirit, to poison the people with heretical doctrines, or, through much corruption, to admit the wicked and unbelieving of the people indiscriminately, to sealing ordinances; thereby subverting and destroying holy discipline, which is the school of loyal and conscientious subjection to the King and laws; then, in such a case, the churches having broken the covenant of doctrine and discipline upon which they were established, and failed from their own engagements, solemnly contracted to the State in the act of their establishment, do virtually subject themselves to the reproach and rebuke of the State; yea, and to be solemnly called in question for their unfaithfulness to their stewardship over the souls of

your Majesty's subjects ; and in so proceeding, your Majesty would be fulfilling the highest duty of a Christian King ; a duty which the church, so far from restraining, hath, in all her Articles and Confessions of Faith, declared to be the first, and highest, and noblest function of the Chief Magistrate of every State.

This certainly is the remedy which is in the hand of your Majesty for the evil complained of, concerning the desecration of the Sacrament ; and to the end that your Majesty, being at all times fully informed of the state of doctrine and discipline, might be able, when the necessity for such reformation occurred, to take order for the same, it is, that your Majesty's throne is erected in the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland, and that your Majesty's person is represented therein by the Lord High Commissioner ; and though I cannot speak with such certain knowledge of the Church of England, I make no doubt, from the known wisdom of her Canons and Constitutions, that there was some similar provision in the Houses of Convocation, which are no longer in active being.

Now, while thus I state the remedy, as a Churchman holding the Constitutions of the Kirk of Scotland, it belongeth not to me to say, whether the disease calleth for the application of the remedy ; nor yet to endeavour to stir up the State to apply it, but simply to declare, that the Constitutions of this Realm, both in Church and State, have provided such a remedy for such a disease. It were much certainly better, that the church, of her own accord, should set about the work of reforming her discipline, and bringing it to be answerable to the pledge which she gave the State, when she was established, that the very thing, written in her books of discipline, might be carried into

effect. But if she should cover herself with empty forms, and cast off the substantial matters of righteousness and holiness, and refuse to listen to the voice of Christ's Lieutenant, asking for no other thing than what she herself hath declared to be holy and good in the sight of God, then the case occurs again, which occurred at the reformation of these kingdoms, and being no new case, it needeth no new remedy. But if the State, instead of applying itself, as heretofore, to bring back the preached word and observed ordinances to their ancient purity, should go about to cast off the allegiance of Christ altogether, by saying, "We will henceforth be ruled by natural equity, and natural good sense alone, without any regard to God's revealed law, and we will be constituted upon the principle of a national compact, and a power delegated from the people, to the people responsible, and to the people reverting, without any acknowledgment of Christ's head-ship, and sovereignty over power; those whom the electors choose, shall, without more ado, be declared elected, nor be required at all to profess their faith in Christ, and union to his church; but baptized, or unbaptized, in communion with, or excommunicated from, the church, he shall be elected, whom the majority of the people have declared for:" then, though I be but a mean man amongst your Majesty's subjects, and my voice should be as the lonely voice of one crying in the desert, I do lift it up, in its strength, and cry aloud with solemn invocation to your Majesty, to our Royal Princes, to our Noble Peers, and Honourable Commons, and to all the people, and in solemn protestation against such an awful act, do warn all of the fearful wrath and judgment of God, which will alight upon the head of a nation,

which, being lifted up to heaven, and exalted to all but almighty power, hath, in her wantonness, and pride, and boastfulness, thrown off the authority of God, and worshipped human wisdom, rather than Christ. Surely such a nation shall be cast to the ground, be brought unto the ashes upon the earth, and made a terror unto men.

In zeal for the righteousness of your Majesty's kingdom, I would never forget my duty unto Christ, your Majesty's King, nor unto the Church, as the mother of Christ's children, and the parent of all blessings unto the nations; nor would I subvert the foundations of Church and State, or put them out of course, by advising, or even permitting the chief Magistrate, though he were the Emperor of dominions larger and mightier than those of Old Rome, to make or to meddle in the doctrine or discipline of the church of Christ; but should, I trust, be found willing, like my fathers, to lay down my life, in meek, and unarmed martyrdom, for the kingly authority of Christ in his house. I mean not that your Majesty, like King Uzziah, should enter into the sanctuary, where the ministers of Christ alone may attend upon the holy things of doctrine and discipline, according to Christ's holy commandment: it is only in enforcing that, which the church, at its establishment, did lay down, as the rule of faith and manner of discipline, that your Majesty's prerogative consisteth. To add thereto, or to take therefrom, belongeth not unto any king, nor indeed unto any power earthly, but resideth in the church, interpreting the Holy Scriptures by the Holy Spirit; and in the event of the church making any essential and fundamental alterations therein, it belongeth, yea, and falleth unto your Majesty, as head of the state, to

consider whether the church, thus altered and newly constituted, be worthy, or be not worthy to continue established as the guardian of religion and morality over those souls which are committed to your Majesty's care, by the great favour of the Lord Jesus Christ to your Majesty's person. But, forasmuch as this case hath not occurred, seeing that neither the church of Scotland nor the Church of England, have in any essential article of doctrine or constitution of discipline, departed from their platform, as laid down at the Revolution, and confirmed for all time coming, at the union; it is not a case of change, but a case of short-coming. The State of Britain is not competent to the question of altering or removing the platform of the two Established Churches, seeing that the dignity of every person in the State, from the throne downwards, standeth constituted in their degrees, only by virtue of their solemn oath and sacrament taken before God, in instruments of his Son's body and blood, that they will be faithful unto Christ, and unto the churches of Christ established in the land; and though it be a bold word, it is a true one, that in high equity, and in true righteousness, the State doth virtually dissolve and remove itself, when it taketh upon itself to do the unconstitutional, I had almost said the sacrilegious, act of bringing in over the Protestant Christian state of Britain any Magistrate or Legislator, who hath not avowed himself to be both a Christian and a Protestant, by eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ.

While, therefore, the unprofitableness of the sacramental test, for the purposes for which it was established, and the desecration and profanation thereof, which doth undoubtedly exist, is a good and sufficient

cause why the State should call upon the church to make good her written rule of discipline, and bring it back to its appointed and established purity; it is no cause, nor indeed can such a cause ever occur, for justifying that which is now proposed, of opening the Government of this Christian and Protestant kingdom to men who are professedly neither Christians nor Protestants. Concerning the Declaration which it is purposed to substitute in the room of the Holy Sacrament, and upon the validity and sufficiency of which there seems to be so much consent, I know not whether to laugh at the folly and futility, or to grieve over the solecisms, errors, and evils, which are contained under it. But that these words are indited unto your Majesty, and for your Majesty's eye intended, if it should please God so highly to honour them, I could not refrain from the mood and language of ridicule, which this Declaration naturally produceth in a mind conversant with the principles of the Church and of the State. That the Christian Religion is the basis on which all our institutions rest, is manifest both from the acts of worship with which every session of the kingdom proceedeth; the name of the blessed Trinity, in which the forms of law and even merchandize run; by the administration of oaths; and here in England by the kissing of the Gospel. It is not that the Christian Religion is patronized by the State; but that the Christian Religion is the ground and basis of the State. Now, the Church is the sacred keeper of the Christian verity, the pillar and ground of the truth. There cannot be a Christian Religion without the Church; and if the State acknowledges the Christian Religion as the ground of its communion, it doth, in the same breath, acknowledge the Church also; and in acknowledging

the Church, your Majesty doth receive your dignity of exercising rule in the name of Christ over the members of Christ, together with the inheritance in God's providence which is promised to kings that rule in his fear. It is Christ's authority in the Church, therefore, which makes your Majesty to differ from an arbitrary, or rather I should say sacrilegious, king, who sets up an authority of his own upon the earth. These, and all the other dignities and blessings of a godly Prince, come from the Church, as she is the Church of Christ, and not as she is the Church of England, or the Church of Scotland. Her establishment is a mere circumstance, neither adding to, nor taking from, her substantial worth and excellence. The Church of Scotland, for example, is the Church of Christ, with this accidental circumstance, that the State of Scotland did adopt it, as the ground of law and government, and society itself. To ask a man, therefore, to declare that he will do nothing to harm the established Churches, is to ask him to do nothing to the prejudice of the Church of Christ, which England and Scotland have adopted as the foundation of the social fabric; and not to injure the social fabric which rests thereon, it is to ask him to declare that he will not plot against your Majesty's person, that he will not break the laws, that he will not trample upon the authorities of the kingdom; to all which, every man is bound by his condition as a subject; and how foolish, then, to ask a declaration of that which is defended by all the sanctions of law and of religion, and constitutes the bonds of the nation.

The framers of the Bill have been led into this absurd solecism by ignorance of the nature of the Church, as if it received its sacred authority from the circum-

stance of its being established, whereas its divine authority and inherent beauty were the very causes of its being established. It contained in it such true morality, such gentle maxims of life, such strong bonds and obligations of man to man, that the State, seeing its own health, and the well-being of its people, to be surely contained therein, did abolish her superstitions, and superstitious usages, and adopt the Gospel, and the Gospel law, as the standard to which all classes and conditions of men should conform themselves. What a thing, then, it is to ask, that the magistrate, and the lawgiver, should, upon their promotion to these high offices, declare that they entertain no felonious purpose against the very life of the society over whose rights they are called to be guardians. To say to them, we will indeed make you rulers over us, but we must ask your favour not to maim or murder us; we will give you a charge in the commonwealth, but you must first declare that you will not become a plotter of sedition: this declaration supposeth every one who makes it, to be as ignorant of the relation between the Church and State, as was the man who framed it. It suspecteth him, moreover, of an evil intention against the foundation of the kingdom; and if he has no such intention already, it suggesteth it unto his mind. Our fathers sought to prevent the evil of bad magistrates, and unprincipled lawgivers, by defining well the character of the men who should be eligible to any office, by requiring that they should be of good report, and in full communion with the Church. And if the powers entrusted were of that high and holy kind, which may not, without a personal covenant, be entrusted unto any man, they superadded the sanction of a solemn oath to be taken, as to how

they should be administered. But to proceed in so high a matter as the interests of the Church by the method of declaration, and that too a negative declaration, is virtually to absolve the party from all his reverence and duty for the Church, and bring her to be at his mercy. To declare against transubstantiation, is to treat such an abomination as it deserves; but to declare not to hurt the Church, is to treat her as if she were helpless and pitiful, and could no longer make shift for herself, and needed to be protected from evil treatment, as an unworthy and useless, and even wicked thing. Oh, what an indignity is (unwittingly I trust) here done unto the Church of Christ! what an exposure to the contempt of her enemies! What a wound is this which she hath received in the house of her friends! Oh, my mother, how unworthy are we become of thy maternal care! Lord Jesus, forgive us this dishonour done unto thy spouse!

As to the declaration, therefore, proposed to be taken at the mouth of every applicant for office, it serveth no end whatever, either of reason or of religion; but on the other hand, is full of evil, as well as of folly. Of folly it is full, inasmuch as it asks for a declaration not to harm that constitution of the church, which is the essence and substance, and in which consisteth the obligations of law and government; as if, on taking a servant into our employment, he should be required solemnly to declare, that he will not hurt his master's person. It is foolish, moreover, inasmuch as it presents that church as an object to be offended, which should always be presented as a mother to be cherished, or rather as the nurse of laws, liberties, and charities, both to the governors

and governed. And finally, it is foolish, as it removes the Christian religion from her seated dignity, as the mother of the liberties and constitutions of the nations, down to the level of one of those constitutions of which she is the mother; yea, and treats her, not only as one of her own children; but as a wayward child, or rather as a testy old woman, who must by no means be meddled with. The folly of it would make one merry, if the evil of it did not rebuke every mood of mirth far away from one's thoughts. Now, the evil consisteth, first, in requiring of a man, who hath professed no faith in Jesus, but, on the other hand, doth haply blaspheme his Divine name, to abide not the less in an attitude of respect and reverence unto his church. Next, it separates the church from Christ her head, as if, in the eye of the State, she were something in herself without her head, which is the exact definition of the Papacy. The magistrate is no longer called upon to profess his faith in Christ, and, therefore, in the eye of the constitution, Christ hath ceased to be Lord; but yet, the church still abideth in a certain offensive existence, which no man may meddle with. Her banner is no more the burning bush, with the motto, *Nec tamen consumebatur*, "and yet was not consumed;" but her standard is changed for the bristling and bearded Thistle, with the motto, *Nemo me impune lacessit*, "no one may touch me with impunity;" or rather the motto, *Noli me tangere*, "touch me at your peril." A most excellent banner, and a most righteous motto, for a royal state, which indeed, and in truth, no one may resist, without resisting God. But for a church, which is set for trial and appointed to suffering, and, when exalted the most by

the hand of the State, ought then most of all to be subject and humble, it is the most formidable banner, and the most fearful motto; as Europe proved for long centuries of Papal dominion, to be ended by short and rapid years of infidel and liberal destructiveness. For a Protestant State to give unto the church such a separate standing in herself, after that State hath disallowed the supremacy of Christ, is indeed the most foolish, and wicked, and ignorant act, of which it can be guilty.

And this is the language which the faithful Church should hold to such a proposal. If, indeed, my Lord is to be disallowed, I desire to be disallowed also. If my Lord is to be no longer established King, let me cease to be established Church. If you can so far violate the covenants of your fathers, as to raise an Unitarian, or a Papist, to hold power and office; violate also the covenants of your fathers made unto me, take back your lands, take back your houses, take back your rich and munificent gifts, which yet are not yours, but mine, by older rights than rights of other property, or of Parliament itself. Yet, if at length the children have risen up against my Lord and Husband, and cast him out of the house, let them know, that I also will go forth out of the house, and without the city, bearing his reproach.

O ye sluggard priests, where are your voices now? O ye time-serving priests, where is your faithfulness now unto Christ, the head of the church? O ye men of God, and true Churchmen, what hath blinded you! what hath spell-bound you, that there is never a voice to shew the wickedness of this Act, which goes to abolish Christ's royal prerogative for ever? Where are ye,

O descendants of the reformers, Knox in the North, and Latimer in the South, who instructed princes and nobles concerning their dignity of ruling without warrant of the Pope, and concerning their duty of ruling by warrant of Christ, putting the foundations of power upon the everlasting mount of Zion? where the descendants of the Wentworths, of Elliot, Hampden, and Pym, who withstood the power, when it would again have interfered with the privileges of the church of Christ? (I speak not of them as men in arms against their King, which God forbid that I should approve, but as men fulfilling their duty in that House, where now hardly one standeth up in the light of the Holy Spirit, multitudes in the darkness and blindness of liberality or irreligion.) Where now are the descendants of the Scottish clergy, and nobles, and gentlemen, and people, who withstood, (I mean not in arms, but in solemn protestation, and in the flames of martyrdom,) the attempts of power to invade the sanctuary of the church? Where are your children gone, O ye fathers of the Protestant church and Protestant kingdom? what land upon the wide earth do they inhabit? O Rachel! O Rachel! weep, weep for thy children, for they are not.

To your Majesty, as the guardian of the laws and constitutions of the realm—to your Majesty, as the nursing father of the church—to your Majesty, as our shield from the fearful visitations of God, which will come upon you and your kingdom, if this Act, asking power, not for the Christian, but for the unbeliever, for all indiscriminately, removing the honour of God from before the eyes of power, should pass into a law—to your Majesty, as a servant of the most high

God, and a promoter of the servants of the most high God, the voice of all your fathers, who have been crowned in the name of Christ, and especially the voice of your own father, our much beloved Sovereign George the III^d, doth now cry from the dust; and the voice of the fathers of the English and Scottish monarchies, who rescued us from the oppression of Rome, doth cry; and a small remnant of enlightened subjects, and true-hearted churchmen, do cry, and make supplication unto your Majesty, even with weeping, that you would not be prevailed upon, by the violent and dunning requests of liberality, nor yet by the hollow pretence of sanctity, nor yet by the silence, the death-like silence of the church, to do this great thing, of sanctioning a law, which doth, without let or hindrance of any kind, open the highest offices in the State to men of no religious profession whatever. Let not your Majesty be offended with the boldness of one of your loyal and dutiful subjects, who hath taken upon him the great liberty of writing a letter unto his King. It is not rashly done. It is not disloyally intended. It is written in great awe and oppression of spirit, by one who revereth your Majesty's person, as Christ's Lieutenant, and teacheth all the people to do the same.

May the Lord preserve the life of your Majesty beyond the life of your progenitors, and give to your Majesty's family, for many generations, the honour and prerogative of being the heads of the Protestation, which hath been lifted up on the earth against the Papal head of the apostate nations; and when your Majesty is called from this highest dignity upon the earth,

of being the great Protestant King; may you receive from Christ, your only Lord and Master, a crown of glory, and a kingdom incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. This is the prayer of your Majesty's most loyal and most dutiful subject,

EDWARD IRVING.



